



**Los Angeles County  
Board of Supervisors**

**Gloria Molina**  
First District

**Mark Ridley-Thomas**  
Second District

**Zev Yaroslavsky**  
Third District

**Don Knabe**  
Fourth District

**Michael D. Antonovich**  
Fifth District

**Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.**  
Director

**Hal F. Yee, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.**  
Chief Medical Officer

**Christina R. Ghaly, M.D.**  
Deputy Director, Strategic Planning

313 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 912  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: (213) 240-8101  
Fax: (213) 481-0503

[www.dhs.lacounty.gov](http://www.dhs.lacounty.gov)

*To ensure access to high-quality,  
patient-centered, cost-effective  
health care to Los Angeles County  
residents through direct services at  
DHS facilities and through  
collaboration with community and  
university partners.*



[www.dhs.lacounty.gov](http://www.dhs.lacounty.gov)

September 24, 2012

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Mitchell H. Katz, M.D.  
Director

SUBJECT: **eCONSULT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

On July 18, 2012, the Department of Health Services (DHS or Department) began its rollout of eConsult, a key component of the Department's plan to improve specialty care access for our patients. eConsult is a web-based application that allows primary care providers (PCPs) and specialists to have a dialogue about a patient to determine the best care plan. In some cases, this tool can eliminate the need for a face-to-face specialty visit, resulting in quicker treatment for the patient and more effective use of specialty appointment slots.

I am pleased to report that even at this early stage, eConsult is showing excellent results as described further below. This success would not have been possible without the strong support of your Board for transforming DHS so that we can be a viable provider under health reform.

## **PARTICIPATING CLINICS AND SPECIALTIES**

Currently nine DHS primary care clinics and nine Community Partner (CP) clinics are participating in eConsult. We plan to add more clinics as the rollout continues.

### Participating DHS Clinics

Antelope Valley Health Center  
El Monte Comprehensive Health Center  
High Desert Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center  
Lake Los Angeles Health Center  
Long Beach Comprehensive Health Center  
Littlerock Health Center  
Mid-Valley Comprehensive Health Center  
Roybal Comprehensive Health Center  
South Valley Health Center

### Participating Community Partners

The Children's Clinic  
East Valley Community Health Center (2 locations)  
Northeast Valley Health Corporation  
Queenscare Family Clinics (2 locations)  
Saban Free Clinic  
Tarzana Treatment Center  
VeniceFamily Clinic

Consultation is now available in four specialties: Cardiology, Dermatology, Neurology and Obstetrics. In addition, we are working with L.A. Care and our eConsult vendor to finalize technical aspects required to launch our next two specialties: Gynecology and Ophthalmology. We're also in the early phases of identifying the next specialties to join.

### **INITIAL RESULTS FROM IMPLEMENTATION**

To date, 169 primary care providers have sought specialty care assistance by submitting eConsult requests, of which 114 have been dispositioned and 55 remain in dialogue between PCPs and specialists. Results of dispositioned eConsults are below.

Required face-to-face visit	56%
Were managed by PCP	36%
Un-needed/re-directed to other specialty	8%

Because eConsults determined that more than one-third of these cases could be treated by the PCP, patients benefitted through earlier treatment and avoidance of an unnecessary specialty visit. In addition, those specialty appointments were preserved for patients requiring a face-to-face visit.

The average response time of a specialty reviewer to a PCP was 1.4 days. The average time from submission of eConsult request to disposition was 3.2 days.

DHS' new Central Referral Unit (CRU) has been receiving all requests for face-to-face visits submitted by specialty reviewers. When the request is received, CRU staff calls patients to personally schedule them for an appointment. PCPs are able to use eConsult to see when and where the specialty appointment has been made for the patient. For patients requiring a specialty appointment, 94% have already been scheduled.

This represents a significant improvement in timely communication for the patients and physicians involved. We have had excellent feedback from physicians who are able to provide better care through eConsult. Following are some examples physicians have shared with us of eConsult in action.

- In the course of reviewing the photographs attached to a Dermatology eConsult, the dermatologist noted that the skin lesion was suspicious for cancer. He worked with the patient's PCP and with the CRU to schedule an expedited skin biopsy.
- In another eConsult, the consulting neurologist was able to work with the PCP to determine the best course of action for a patient having difficult-to-control headaches. The speed of the eConsult interaction enabled the patient to experience treatment for his headaches more quickly than through traditional methods of specialty care referral.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Thank you for your support as we continue to work to improve access to specialty care through eConsult, as well as other initiatives throughout the Department. We will provide you with ongoing updates on our progress.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please let me know, or you may contact Dr. Hal F. Yee, Jr., DHS Chief Medical Officer, at (213) 240-7989.

MHK:ws

c: Chief Executive Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Office, Board of Supervisors